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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 003229

SIPDIS

STATE PASS AIT/W

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SUBJECT: LY PRESIDENT WANG ON ELECTION POLITICS

REF: TAIPEI 03141

Classified By: AIT Deputy Director David Keegan, Reasons: 1.4 (B/D)

11. (C) Summary: Legislative Yuan (LY) President Wang Jin-pyng told AIT that he expects the Pan-Blue to maintain its LY majority despite the PFP's declining popularity. Wang projected that there would be virtually no change in the balance between the two camps from the 2001 election. Wang downplayed prospects that the KMT and PFP would complete their merger before the December LY election. He told AIT that given the acrimonious relations between all the parties, constructive debate on legislation pending before the LY, including the supplemental defense budget, will be difficult. Wang's prediction that the Pan-Blue will prevail may reflect more his hope to remain speaker than it does cold political realities. End Summary.

December LY Election

12. (C) Commenting on each party's prospects in the December 11 LY election, Wang told AIT October 6 that he thought the DPP would win 86 of 225 elected seats. The TSU, Wang said would win 15-16 seats, giving the Pan-Green alliance 101-102 seats in the next LY session. Wang estimated that the KMT would win 76-78 seats (including four from the New Party). He was less optimistic about the PFP's election prospects. Wang initially predicted that the PFP would gain 46 seats. Then in the same breath, he revised this number down to 43, thought for a moment, and changed the number to 35. After more thought, he settled on 38-39, as the number of seats he expected the PFP to win, giving the Pan-Blue 114-117 seats. Wang pointed out that even if the Pan-Green were to win another 4 seats, the Pan-Blue would still be the largest camp with 110-113 seats. Wang said that he expected that a few pro-Blue independents would give the Blue a working majority.

Bad time for multi-partisan cooperation

13. (C) Wang told AIT that he was also trying to heal the growing rift between the KMT and PFP but many KMT legislators saw the PFP's decline in the polls as being beneficial to their election prospects. Wang could not explain why KMT elders, such as former Premier Lee Huan, had been attacking PFP Chairman James Soong in the press. As the currently situation stands, Wang said he did not expect a KMT-PFP merger before the December election.

14. (C) Wang said the relations between all the parties are extremely acrimonious at the moment, which has made coordination and cooperation on legislation pending before the LY very difficult. He cited the special defense procurement budget as an example (Reftel). He also complained that the Presidential Office is trying to taint his reputation within the Pan-Blue by creating an impression that he is colluding with the DPP on various issues and fronts. He said that those rumors had made it difficult for him to operate effectively within the KMT. When asked about the effect of local media reports about his meeting with former President Lee Teng-hui, Wang evaded the question and said that Lee cannot abide Chen Shui-bian and called those meetings to rant about Chen.

Comment: Silent as an oyster

15. (C) Throughout the conversation Wang was clearly measuring each word and impression like the skilled backroom machine politician he has long been. In response to rumors that he has "green bones" and has been working with Chen Shui-bian and Lee Teng-hui, and to questions about his role within the KMT, Wang was as guarded as ever. As usual, he attacked Chen and the Presidential Office for efforts to undermine him, and even complained that they were tapping his telephones and conversations.

16. (C) Wang's assessment of the Pan-Blue's election prospects appear to be on the optimistic end, giving his side about four percentage points higher than what other political observers are estimating. While most observers agree that a major shift in LY balance is unlikely, Wang's numbers assume that voters disillusioned with the PFP would automatically

shift their support to the KMT. The estimate may be even more unrealistic, given the almost total lack of a Pan-Blue election strategy, a subject we will address septel. However, since Wang's own political future hinges on the Pan-Blue maintaining a majority so that he can remain speaker, it is not surprising that he would see the cup more than half full.

PAAL